

# On the Table

no. 2



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A B  
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We are *On the Table*, McGill University's 100% student-run culinary magazine. With Montreal as our home base, we are highly curious about the food scene across our campus and city. Mainly, though, we just have a lot of fun talking about food and the beverages that go with it—their flavours, processes, histories, politics, and pleasures.

Our team is made up of about 15 undergraduate students from nearly every department, meaning that the work we put out is quite varied and even educational. Together, our main desire is to share the many ways we eat and drink, student-to-student.

We launched our website, [onthetablemag.com](http://onthetablemag.com), on October 1st of 2021. Online, you'll notice that we divide our articles into three categories: At Home, On the Town, and In the Know. At Home stands for anything domestic, such as recipes and personal stories. On the Town covers content about Montreal and Quebec. In the Know catches more informative material, like food science and food history. In this issue (graciously funded by SSMU), you can imagine each of these pieces as belonging to one or more of these classifications.

We hope that our magazine encourages you to get curious about the physical, mental, and emotional forces of food. If you are interested in joining, turn to the last page for details.

Issue no. 2 is a re-invitation we extend to you to gather chez nous, where there's always something hot on the table waiting to be discussed and devoured in good company.

Hi there reader,

Welcome to our second print edition. If you have read the first, thank you for sticking with us. If you haven't, thank you for being open to something unfamiliar.

Despite having been created almost entirely over Zoom and Google Docs, this issue has caused many significant encounters for me. I got to interview a literary idol of mine, Fred Wah, to discuss Cantonese food and his genius work, *Diamond Grill* (p. 15). I met with my dear friend, Liam, who relayed to me how fortunate he felt to have exchanged thoughts on diet culture with one of our writers, Bery (p. 21). I drove to Dunham with one of our photographers, Lysette, where we drank unfiltered maple syrup (we agreed they should sell that in stores instead of the filtered version), and took turns driving a tractor out of a sugar bush (p. 27).

I will miss these moments and this team in the fall. *On the Table*, and the people who have helped materialize it, has eaten up much of my attention for almost a year. I think I will feel a slight relief, but also a good measure of grief, when it is officially passed into the hands of the next editor-in-chief. Many of us are graduating this term, which means the magazine will lose a number of creative and committed individuals. It also means that there is room for more of this type to join the mag next term, and I hope I have laid down a decent enough foundation for them to evolve it in whatever new directions they desire.

It is difficult for me to see Issue no. 2 as something other than a farewell—to my team, the school year, my undergrad, McGill—but it is, in many ways, a greeting. With this issue, we usher in summer, warmth, and vibrance. In these pages, you'll find a comprehensive guide to ice cream's variations and where to find them in Montreal, a friendly gathering of recipes, a sugar shack captured in one of its final weekends, a glimpse into the future of food and robots, our first print article in French, and more.

What you see might inspire you to become a part of *On the Table* in the fall, in which case you should flip to the final page for information on just this. If next year's team is anything like this year's, you will join a community of food-loving, innovative, intelligent, and kind people.

Happy reading, and happy summer!

Sincerely,

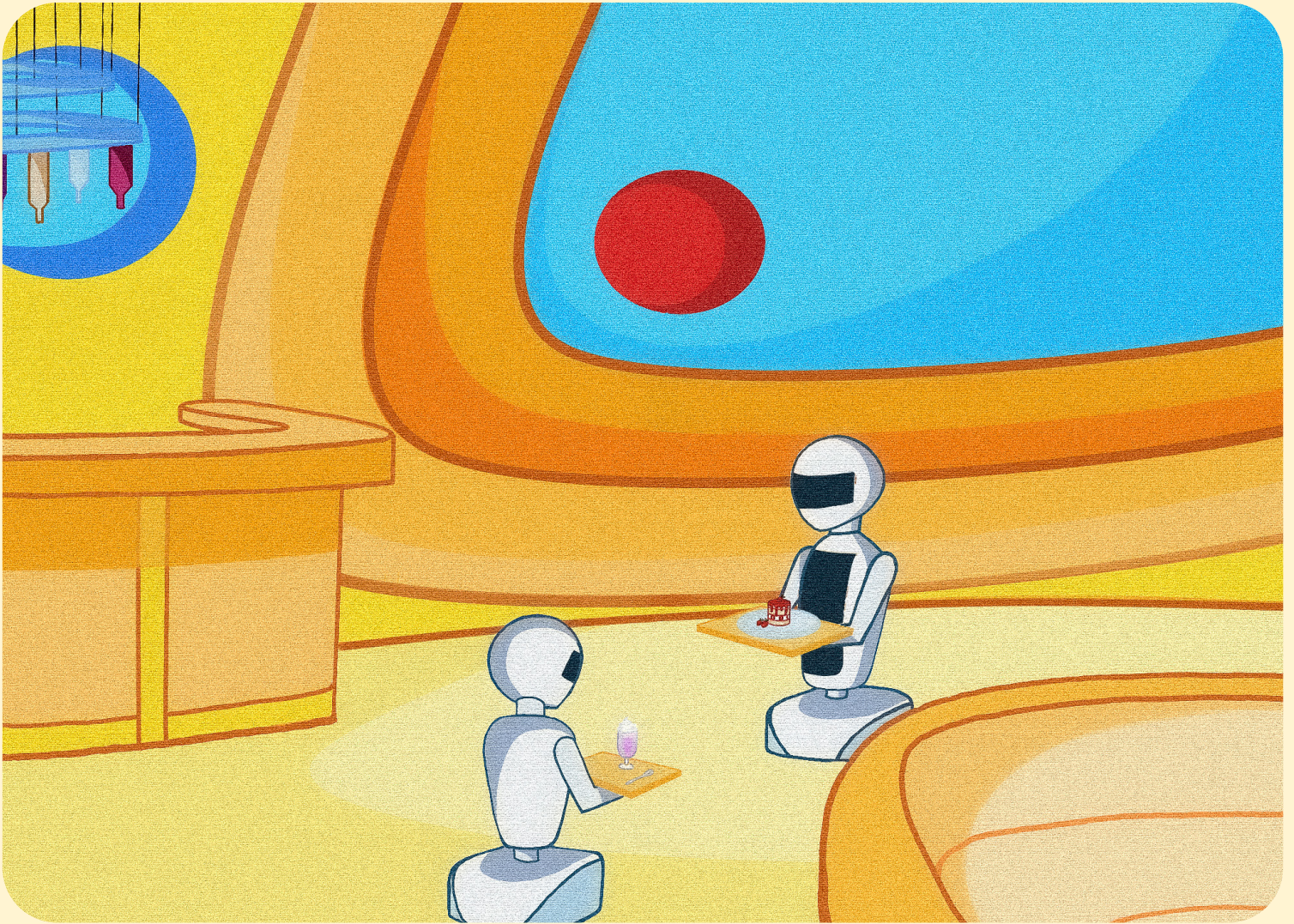
**Evelyne Eng**

Editor-in-Chief









# A Recipe for the Future: Robots of the Food Industry

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**Text and illustration  
by Kelly Xiang**

As Artificial Intelligence becomes increasingly popular and sophisticated, robots have assumed more and more roles across all culinary disciplines. For many years, restaurants in East Asia—particularly China—have used robots as greeters and waiters. With the lingering staffing shortages and capacity limitations caused by COVID-19, this trend will likely continue into the post-pandemic world. Recent developments in machine learning have even introduced



robots into professional kitchens. These highly-advanced robots not only assist in functional tasks, such as cooking and preparing dishes, but also act as gustatory databases to develop new food combinations and recipes. While such technology is still new, many of these machines already assist famous chefs and occupy world-renowned kitchens. The 2022 Beijing Olympics demonstrated how such technology can be implemented on a grand scale. With the dining hall, kitchen, and bar all operating via robots, the Olympic Village illustrated the potential future of restaurants and dining. One must wonder, however, where such rapid and wide development leaves human workers.

Robots and technology are most easily and frequently employed for table service. From greeting guests to serving food, these robots run from table to table as any human waiter or waitress would. When they run low on battery, they proactively direct themselves to designated charging stations. Unsurprisingly, the ease and efficiency of these robots have made them immensely popular for both local restaurants and large chains. Harbin Dumplings, a traditional Chinese dumpling joint, was the first Montreal restaurant to hire these robotic employees. Waitress Joyce Zhang explained that these robots “help [the] waitstaff serve customers more quickly,” as well as alleviate the physical demands of walking “around and back, around and back” from kitchen to table. These robots are also fluent in French and Mandarin, fulfilling the language laws of Quebec and catering to their main international clientele.

The greatest advantage of these robots is not, however, their intelligence, but rather their efficiency and reliability. Robot waiters do not require training, tips, sick days, or vacation. Considering the ongoing pandemic protocols and staffing shortages, these characteristics are crucial to the survival of many restaurants. Additionally, the retail price of these robots is around \$10,000, which is about half as costly as a human waiter’s annual salary. This cost is also a one-time investment, whereas human salaries renew each year.

Nonetheless, these robots are not without their disadvantages. For instance, when the robots detect the need to recharge, they make a quick and hasty exit. This makes for an awkward interaction if they are in the midst of greeting or serving customers. Furthermore, these robots shy away from customers wearing large amounts of metal jewelry. In order to guarantee the optimal experience, human servers or owners must then check customers’ attire and accessories before dining. Another fault of these robots is their limitation in physical and interactive functions. According to Zhang, Harbin Dumpling’s robotic servers cannot transfer food onto diners’ tables, so they are not perfect replacements for human waiters. Additionally, it is difficult for the robots to answer specific questions and facilitate real conversations with customers. Those who ask questions are sometimes ignored, with the robots saying a brief “bon appetit” before taking off, or they are dragged into long, awkward conversations. In terms of the social element of dining, these aspects take away from the experience of eating out.

Beyond the dining room, robots are entering kitchens and food development rooms. One of IBM’s Computational Creativity projects specifically focuses on using AI to assist in the creation of new food combinations and recipes. By simply inputting ingredients into a search bar, identifying the desired cuisine, and selecting a dish, an array of recipes are generated. Even professional chefs—such as Nicolas Maire, who has collected a total of eighteen Michelin stars in his career—have begun using this technology to create new food combinations and dishes. In fact, Maire’s sous-chef is a robot named Sam. Although lacking a sense of taste, Sam contains a database of ingredients and recipes that spans 60 years of culinary experience and restaurant history. And with the power of machine learning, Sam can test flavour combinations just as well as any human flavour chemist. Primed with knowledge of food chemistry and psychology, Sam also only takes a fraction of the time to work as his human counterpart.

Still, Sam is not a perfect alternative to a human flavour chemist. Since the human sense of taste can change due to preceding flavours, the order of dishes and flavours is a primary concern for food chemists. Sam can only analyse food combinations as individual dishes, rather than a succession of courses. Therefore, flavour chemists are still required to participate in tastings of multi-course meals and double-check Sam’s combinations in order to restore the human quality of gustatory inconsistency that Sam lacks. As a result, Sam can only serve as an assistant to human chefs.

The Olympics displayed the scale and capacity of such technology. Similarly to their use in restaurants, these robots were implemented to prevent the spread of COVID-19 and alleviate the staff needed to host thousands of athletes and media personnel. Equipped with automated cooks, waiters, and bartenders, the Village dining hall was AI’s most ambitious culinary effort. These machines not only prepared food and delivered meals, but they also mixed cocktails and disinfected appliances. The robots’ delivery system added a further element of excitement and entertainment to dining. With suspension cables lining the dining hall ceiling, robots gently lowered meals directly to diners’ tables. International athletes and media have remarked on the futuristic and out-of-this-world atmosphere of this entire system. One journalist called it “something from science fiction,” while another called it an “efficient” and “fun” experience.

In light of these developments, it is easy to envision automation replacing humans in the culinary world. With the advantages and disadvantages of culinary robots, however, there is still a long way to go until complete transformation. Although the Olympic dining hall was equipped with a comprehensive and all-inclusive system, Beijing only created this system due to the pandemic and the prestige of the Olympics. It seems unreasonable to expect regular restaurants to implement equally advanced and comprehensive measures. Ultimately, while these technologies exist, much development still needs to happen before they become the norm.

# ALONG THE LINES OF ICE CREAM

by Bavisha Thurairajah

It's getting warmer, brighter, and sunnier outside, which means that it is almost the perfect time for...ICE CREAM! Although the creaminess of this dessert is enjoyable at any time, it is undeniably a summertime favourite—a cold treat to help cool you down when hanging out with friends and family under the baking-hot Montreal sun.

Ice cream, at its foundational level, is typically made from a base consisting of milk, cream, and sugar, which is churned to create a perfectly smooth and melty frozen delight. While the quality and ratio of these ingredients vary, the base must contain 10–16% milk fat in order to be considered ice cream. A variety of ingredients are usually incorporated into the base to take the taste up a notch. These can range from common flavour-giving mix-ins, like vanilla beans, to more unique additives, like Flamin' Hot Cheetos. While this may throw off some flavour traditionalists, ice cream geniuses are getting increasingly creative these days, ensuring there is always something new to try. Humans love this immensely popular dessert so much, we've figured out a variety ways to eat it: sundaes, floats, milkshakes, banana splits, and much more. Even the main star of these dishes, ice cream itself, comes in many different forms across the globe. Luckily for those of us in the McGill community, Montreal is home to a number of great ice cream shops, or *crémeries*, that specialise in each of these variations. Before we take a closer look at them, a brief history of ice cream is due.

The origin of ice cream is still a matter of debate and greatly depends on how you define the term. Some say that it goes all the way back to 200 BCE, when people in China created a frozen mixture of rice and milk by packing it into snow. By 618 AD, emperors of the Tang Dynasty of China were eating icy sweets made from cow, goat, or buffalo milk; flour; and camphor. Others say that it owes its beginnings to the Romans, who combined ice with fruit juices and wines as early as 54–68 BCE for cooling purposes. They say that the fall of the Roman Empire obscured the historic presence of ice cream in this region until it was rediscovered much later.

These are just a few accounts that exist out there, and there are many more that trace ice cream's history to ancient Egypt, Persia, and numerous other countries. It is hard to pinpoint the exact place or time of the creation of ice cream-like dishes, and it is entirely possible that they were conceptualised in different contexts simultaneously

for the cooling escape they provide. There are many stories of different regions that used a variety of ingredients to produce such sweets. While the previously mentioned foods resemble what we would define today as sorbet, granita, or sherbet, Middle Eastern individuals started using milk and sugar as the primary ingredients in their frozen desserts, which tasted more like modern ice cream, in 800 AD. These icy creations were primarily consumed by royalty, as the production process was expensive.

Different recipes for these foods were said to have been introduced (or reintroduced) to Europe through Italy, which was the centre of trade with the Middle East and Asia during the 13th and 14th centuries. One account claims that travellers who visited the Mongol emperor Kublai Khan at Shung-tu returned to Italy with a recipe for milk-ice that was centuries old. In 1553, these desserts were introduced to France by Catherine de Medici, a member of a powerful Italian noble family, when she married Henry II of France. During the same period, the desserts were becoming known to England. King Charles I of England often served “milk ice” at his table, and there are rumours that he paid his chef about £500 a year to keep his recipe hidden from the rest of the country. Ice cream was eventually made available to those outside of the high-class circle in the 17th century, as individuals outside of the royal courts started making it to sell. One of the first locations where it was available to the general public was Café Procope, among the oldest cafes of Paris. It served a wonderful frozen mixture of milk, cream, butter, and eggs.

Ice cream was brought to North America in the 18th century by Scottish colonists, but it wasn't until the 19th century that the industry really started picking up, gradually evolving into what it is today. The large-scale production of this food owes its existence to many technological innovations that occurred during this period, such as the development of mechanical refrigeration, the homogenizer, and packing machines. As its popularity grew, new ways of serving and making ice cream developed, offering everyone a variety of ways to enjoy it.

Now that we have seen how ice cream evolved throughout history, let's dive into the details of some of its variations. A few are older and closer to their origins than others, but they are all delicious and worth a try.

# GELATO

When I think of ice cream variations, gelato is the first that comes to mind. There is some uncertainty about who exactly invented this Italian delicacy, but the most popular account is that artist and architect Bernardo Buontalenti created it in the 14th century. It was brought to the North American continent in 1770 by Italian native Giovanni Biasiolo but was overshadowed by ice cream for a long time, until the 1900s. The difference between ice cream and gelato lies in the ratio of ingredients used. Both begin with a base of milk, cream, and sugar, but ice cream contains more cream, whereas gelato usually contains more milk. This means that the fat content is comparatively lower in gelato, specifically only about 4–9%. The churning process also contributes to the variance between the two. Ice cream is churned at a higher speed, meaning that it incorporates more air during the freezing process, while gelato is churned at a lower speed, meaning that it incorporates relatively less air and thus has a denser consistency. The density and lower fat percentage of gelato enhances its flavour, as there is less air in each bite to dilute the flavour, and less fat to coat the palate and block the food from fully reaching the taste buds. Traditionally, gelato is served using a spade, a spatula-like metal tool, instead of a scoop. It is also served at a higher temperature than ice cream, between  $-12^{\circ}\text{C}$  to  $-6^{\circ}\text{C}$ , as opposed to  $-13^{\circ}\text{C}$  or  $-14^{\circ}\text{C}$ , which is also meant to intensify the taste.

Gastronomia Roberto on Rue Bélanger has been producing and serving award-winning, traditional gelato since 1982, evident in flavours like lemon meringue and nougat.

# FROZEN YOGURT

Frozen yogurt is a tangy ice cream alternative that has both ancient and modern roots. The main ingredient, yogurt, was developed during the Neolithic period about five to ten thousand years ago in Asia, Europe, and the Middle East. Officially, frozen yogurt wasn't conceptualised until the 1970s, when Harvey Perley Hood, of Boston, Massachusetts, introduced a soft-serve-type yogurt dish he called "frogurt." Froyo is made using pasteurised milk and live yogurt cultures, usually *Lactobacillus bulgaricus* and *Streptococcus thermophilus*. A mixture of these ingredients is heated and cooled to specific temperatures. After this processing, other ingredients, including sugar and stabilisers, are added to the mix. Originally, in the '70s, frozen yogurt was made without sugar. Through experimentation, froyo-makers realised that sugar helps to create a smooth, creamy, soft-serve consistency because it prevents the formation of large ice crystals during the freezing process. Frozen yogurt is thus different in its sugar content from regular yogurt and may even contain more sugar than some ice cream recipes.

There are plenty of self-serve frozen yogurt shops that allow you to choose from a number of rotating flavours and numerous toppings all over Montreal. Yeh! and Menchies are some of the well-known franchises with many locations. You can also check out Yogurty's on Avenue du Parc, which has many low-fat and no-fat variations, including PB&J and Pumpkinstein, a green-coloured, pumpkin-spice flavour.



# FROZEN CUSTARD

Another ice-cream variation developed in the United States is frozen custard. It was invented by ice cream vendors Archie and Elton Kohr in 1919 in Coney Island, New York. This variation is especially dense and rich, since it contains the exact same three ingredients as ice cream, plus the addition of egg yolks (some homemade ice cream recipes actually incorporate egg yolks, meaning that they can technically be considered frozen custard recipes). To be considered custard, 1.4% of the dessert has to be pasteurised egg yolk. This addition creates a smoother, more luscious consistency, and some say it even helps the scoop remain cold for a longer period of time. Ice cream and custard are churned professionally with different machines. The former is churned in machines that incorporate air into the mixture while freezing it, resulting in a light and airy final product. The latter is churned in continuous freezers that incorporate a minimal amount of whipped air, resulting in a denser final product.

You can find frozen custard in Montreal at Crèmerie Meu Meu on Rue St. Denis. All of their sweets, including their custard base, are made with natural ingredients.

# VEGAN ICE CREAM

This variation is great for those of us seeking a dairy-free alternative to ice cream. Vegan ice cream can officially be traced back to 1899, when Michigan native Amelda Lambert recorded her recipes for frozen desserts made with almond or peanut cream, sugar, and vanilla in a vegetarian cookbook entitled *Guide for Nut Cookery*. At the time, it was a new concept to use such ingredients to make ice cream, but today, plant-based ice creams are much more mainstream and widely available. Most commercial ice cream brands have their own vegan options. While Lambert's recipe is nut based, vegan ice cream can be made using any dairy substitute, such as coconut, oat, and soy. Some recipes even use a tofu or pea protein base. Almond milk is one of the most common bases and is relatively neutral in flavour, while coconut milk has a distinct flavour that is rich in saturated fat, resulting in an especially creamy ice cream.

Many ice cream shops across Montreal serve vegan options on top of their standard options. A few of these locations include L'Armoire à Glaces, with options made using local ingredients, and Crèmerie Dalla Rose, which makes a coconut matcha flavour. There are also some shops, like Crèmerie SWIRL on Rue Rachel E., that specialise in hand-crafted vegan ice cream.

# NICE CREAM

As I was searching for information about vegan ice cream, I stumbled upon this variation and felt that it deserved its own mention. Nice cream is a specific kind of vegan ice cream that is made using frozen fruit, typically bananas. Frozen bananas provide a nice soft-serve texture, while other fruits and ingredients can be added for flavour, such as mango or cacao. Some recipes use only frozen bananas for the base by first letting them thaw a bit for a smoother consistency, while others suggest adding plant-based milks to the mixture. It is termed “nice” cream because of its lack of dairy and added sugar. Bananas help with sweetness, and the riper the banana is prior to freezing, the sweeter the final product is. While this concept may not be entirely new or rooted in a specific location, the official title only came about in the last few years. It is particularly popular because of its simplicity. Nice cream is easy and fun to make at home with a high-speed blender or food processor.

A quick Google search of nice cream will lead you to a variety of recipes. You can also pick up some nice cream from Rawesome on Rue Gounod. They specialise in raw vegan ice creams and desserts, including lemon basil nice cream, in addition to cashew cheeses and spreads.

# SORBET

Another dairy-free variation is sorbet. As previously suggested, the history of this treat is tightly linked to the origins of ice cream. Sorbet is typically made with frozen fruit, juice or wine, sugar, and water. It is thus usually found in, but not limited to, fruity and juicy flavours, although some sorbets have a floral, herbal, or even spicy taste. The use of water, as opposed to milk or dairy substitutes, creates an icier and lighter consistency than other frozen desserts. The simple list of ingredients, however, can pose a challenge to the at-home sorbet maker because it could easily become too icy, too melty, or too sweet. It thus requires some skill, patience, and a few tricks to make a good sorbet. While most sorbets are vegan, some are made with the addition of egg whites to help the food keep its form. Some sorbet recipes suggest adding a bit of alcohol to prevent the mix from freezing solid.

A good place to get your fill of sorbet in Montreal is Havre aux Glaces, an artisanal ice cream shop with multiple locations in Jean Talon Market, Atwater Market, and Place des Arts. This shop contains an extensive range of ice cream flavours, cakes, and artisanal sorbets. Sea buckthorn, pear, and lulo orange are just a few of the flavours you’ll find there.

# SHERBET

It's quite common to mistake sherbet for sorbet, as people tend to use the terms interchangeably, but they are quite different. They vary on one key dimension: the addition of milk. While most of the ingredients, and even the origins, of both dishes are the same, sherbet is typically made with a little bit of milk, cream, or buttermilk to give it a creamier mouth feel than sorbet. Compared to ice cream, however, it has an icier texture, since sherbet is required to contain less than 2% fat by law.

To taste the difference for yourself, try a scoop of mandarin orange or tropical storm sherbet during that same trip for frozen yogurt at Yogurty's.

# BOOZA

Out of all of these variations, booza is probably the one with the most unique texture, an extremely fun stretchiness—imagine being able to do a “cheese pull” but with ice cream! Countless videos online show people doing just that with this 500 year-old creation. Coming from the Eastern Mediterranean region, which today encompasses modern-day Lebanon, southern Turkey, Syria, and some parts of Greece, booza owes its elasticity to two local ingredients: sahlab or salep and mastic. The former refers to ground orchid root, which is used to thicken the base, while the latter denotes a gum resin extracted from mastic trees. These ingredients, along with a standard base, are poured into a freezer drum and then pounded with a large wooden pestle during the freezing process. Alternating between pounding and stretching by hand helps to develop elasticity. Booza melts at a slower pace than regular ice cream, meaning that it keeps its shape for longer and is less likely to drip all over you.

While it may be a little out of the way for most of us in the McGill area, Laval's Bouza offers handcrafted, high-quality booza in a number of traditional flavours, with the option to have your cup topped with crushed pistachios.

# KULFI

Kulfi is close in richness to frozen custard and popular in India, Pakistan, Myanmar, and Bangladesh. It originated in northern India under the Mughal Empire of the 16th century and was traditionally made by sweetening milk and cooking it over a low temperature for a long period of time to reduce and thicken the mixture, simultaneously caramelising the lactose and sugar. It was enhanced with traditional ingredients like pistachios and saffron, then poured into small pot moulds called matkis and frozen using ice and salt. While this cooking process was quite laborious, kulfi can today be made at home using simpler methods. Condensed or evaporated milk and thickening ingredients like cornstarch, or even breadcrumbs, can be added to quicken the cooking process; plus, no ice cream machines are needed. On top of its classic flavours, kulfi also comes in rose, cardamom, and mango. Due to the use of cone moulds, it's typically served on a stick, like a popsicle.

Kulfi sticks can be found in many Indian or Sri Lankan grocery stores around town. If you're interested in Indian flavours, visit Crèmerie Meetha on Rue de Liège O. to pick up a pint of ice cream based on a popular Indian dessert, such as gulab jamun, jalebi, and peda.

**READING  
DIAMOND  
GRILL  
FROM THE  
HYPHEN  
BY EVELYNE ENG**

In Nelson, a small town in B.C., there once was a Chinese-Canadian cafe by the name of Diamond Grill. By far the most modern establishment in town, according to the stainless steel standards of the 1950s, that restaurant was where award-winning Canadian poet Fred Wah hustled alongside his father, serving up “mixed grill,” towering ice cream sundaes, and Salisbury steak specials prepared by Chinese cooks for white customers.

Fred captures the cafe in his “biofiction,” *Diamond Grill*, which he began writing in 1988 as a sort of accident. That summer, Fred was serving as writer-in-residence at UAlberta. He and fellow poet bpNichol were teaching a summer writing workshop, during which the latter bugged Fred until he agreed to participate in Pulp Press’s 3-Day Novel Contest. Mainly, Fred was just stoked to try out his new iMac.

“I just sat down one Friday midnight on Labour Day weekend and started writing family stories, sort of talking for no reason. I was frightened by prose. The only thing I could write out in prose were memories of my family and family stories,” Fred said.

About 72 hours later, he ended up with 60 or so pages of family stories, which he consigned to a drawer, away from the intrigued eyes of his publisher. Fortunately, Aritha Van Herk, one of Fred’s colleagues at UCalgary, eased the pages into her own hands and began editing. By 1996, *Diamond Grill* was published and classified as a “biofiction.” Part-memoir and part-fiction, the work is organised in anecdotes about Diamond Grill, Chinese food, life in the Kootenays, and the Wahs.

Wah senior, who was half-Chinese and half-Scots-Irish, was born in Medicine Hat, Alberta but raised in China, and ended up marrying a woman from Sweden. That makes Fred Wah a Scots-Irish-Swedish-Chinese-Canadian, or whichever order you prefer.

“I felt a certain Chineseness that was hard to explain,” Fred said. “I was always sort of caught in between being seen as white but having this Chinese name. In the small town when I grew up, it wasn’t a problem—I was known as the Chink. Although, in the ‘50s, there was no way to talk about it, it was just sort of there.”

Unsurprisingly, one of the book’s primary themes is this embodied hybridity, which plays out in how Fred talks about himself, but also about food and family. Take this passage as an example, wherein Fred remembers his father:

“Where did that taste for such zip Charlie-chim-chong-say-wong-lung-ching come to your mouth in a shot shout as you clicked your tongue eyes sparkled if it was too hot too much kick they’d water a bit and you’d cut the sauce with what, HP, or maybe that other dark brown steak sauce A-I under the counters by the cutlery trays. Not cayenne. No, that was never your spice. Chili powder. You looked more Mexican than Chinese and I thought fiction could have made you Filipino.”



*Lawrence Mar cleans up the glistening interior of Diamond Grill.*



We can hear the influence of improvisational jazz in the percussive staccato of the hyphenated phrase, the open flow of the run-on sentence, the unpredictable placement of punctuation, the repetition of consonants, and the rejection of straightforward direction. Fred studied music at UBC, which opened the door to an ambivalent, impulsive approach, especially on the subject of racial hybridity or in-betweenness.

"I've always been interested in playing around, in improvisation. That ends up suiting me very well when it comes to negotiating the story of being 'in-between' because it's not appropriated by forms and expectations," Fred explained. "The tyranny of the sentence, like the tyranny of the European imagination, was something I felt interested in challenging. The prose poem opens itself up to that. I could invade the sentence by doing run-on and intervening in the expectation that the sentence would be a complete thing. Exploring that resistance to closure fits right along with the whole notion of being in the hyphen, resisting the closure of moving one way or another."

In *Diamond Grill*, the hyphen appears in tangible form as the swinging door between the kitchen and the dining room. When Fred worked there, he loved to kick that door, to hear the WHAP and feel the shock resonating in his body. The door is the literal and metaphorical divide between Chinese- and white-Canadian, producer and consumer, and "the meaningless but familiar hum of Cantonese and . . . all the angst of the arrogant white world out front."

"The advantage of standing in the doorway is that you have a view of both rooms, so your view is much broader and more comprehensive from that position," Fred elaborated.

As a whole, the book may be read as the hyphen rendered audible. In February of this year, Fred and a small team of actors recorded "A Door to be Kicked," a three-part play composed of passages from *Diamond Grill*, for Kootenay Co-op Radio (available on Spotify). We literally hear the smack of that door, and Fred's voice reading out the part of his father. It feels as though we have gone through a door to the past, listening to an original recording of the noises of *Diamond Grill*: layers of Cantonese curses, jazz tunes, clinking dishes, shouted food orders, and conversations between young Fred and his family members.

*Diamond Grill* is gone now, along with most of the dozen or so other Chinese cafes of Nelson. The food departed with them, so that one can no longer easily find what Fred describes as the "colonial type of food," like hot beef sandwiches and chicken pot pies, that scattered Chinese cooks hailing from the same villages in Canton taught each

other in order to make a life in western Canada. Certain recipes for non-Canadian Chinese food, like juk, are preserved in *Diamond Grill*, however. Apparently they work well; educators teaching the book have been known to ask their students to make its dishes and have a *Diamond Grill* class potluck.

At the time that I interviewed him, Fred's daughter had recently thrown a family reunion. He would have made juk from his book, but because he hadn't eaten turkey this Christmas, he didn't have the stock to make it with. Instead, his daughter made homemade chow mein and Fred went hunting for BBQ duck in Vancouver Chinatown, where he used to travel by bus in order to get some proper rice and soy sauce meals as an undergrad.

I do the same now, here in Montreal, and it stirs up a subtle dissonance within me. Like Fred, I am a mix of Chinese and white, although I am split 50/50, and I do not speak Chinese of any kind (it would be the Toisanese dialect, if I did). The Chinese side of my family spent a lot of time working in Chinese restaurants, mainly in Montreal and Chateauguay, washing dishes, cleaning, cooking, serving, and eventually owning and losing.

When I walk around Montreal Chinatown, I try to imagine what it would have felt like to be there in the '50s, '60s, and '70s, when my family was there. I base my little fictions on archival photos and figments of stories my father has told me. I pass the spot that used to be Dufferin Square, the vanished park behind the Catholic and Presbyterian churches, where my father was burned with a cigarette by an older white boy he thought wanted to play with him. I wait at the corner for the light to change, around where my grandfather waited on tables at the now-extinct Chez Cathay. I cross the street and maybe I go by restaurants owned by people with whom my family was close, where they might have drunk tea together. I stand in front of Wing's, where I thought my great-grandmother had worked and therefore felt a certain fondness towards, until my father told me that someone in the family had made a mistake on that point, that she had actually worked at Wong Wing wrapping egg rolls. And then I no longer know what I feel towards that building, except that I think Valerie Plante and the Quebec Culture and Communications Minister did the right thing by not letting a private developer demolish it. And that this decision might become a lot less meaningful if the plan to build the REM de l'Est station right next to Chinatown's gates goes through.

But really I wish that I didn't have to try and imagine what it was like before because there are so many gaps that I have to fill in with speculation and fantasy. I did not work



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*From 1977-88, the yellow and green, oval sign of Jade d'Orient was illuminated every night at sunset.*

beside my father or deal with direct racism. So what I feel at times is gratitude and guilt, the second of which is pretty nonsensical and probably has something to do with my hybridity. I hear it in this passage from *Diamond Grill*:

“But then after we’ve exchanged our mutual family news and I’ve eaten a wonderful dish of tofu and vegetables, back outside, on the street, all my ambivalence gets covered over, camouflaged by a safety net of class and colourlessness—the racism within me that makes and consumes that neutral (white) version of myself, that allows me the sad, sad privilege of being in this white white world, not the target but the gun.”

At first, my self-identification with the text seemed absurd. Fred Wah wrote about a small town in the ‘50s from the hindsight of the ‘90s, while I am in 2022 in a cosmopolitan city, where those things don’t matter as much. I use this logic until I recall the recent, horrendous violence against Asians in cities, including Montreal, that I had supposed were safe from that. These events remind me that I am not so cleanly separated from my family’s past. It terrifies and pleases me.

*Diamond Grill* granted me the permission I hadn’t realised I needed to write about my Chinese side, even though I’m

not full-blooded and can barely speak a word of Toisanese. Further, it struck me how much I had longed for literature that at least partially described what I feel as a part-Chinese-Canadian descendant of immigrant restaurant workers, although they are so much more than that.

While Fred’s father was running *Diamond Grill*, my grandfather, Jimmy Ng, was peeling potatoes at the Jewish institution *Lindy’s*, which used to sit at Parc and St. Joseph, until he got a gig as a server at *China Garden Cafe* on Stanley. It was one of the busiest Chinese restaurants in the city, right next to where the legendary *Lime Light* disco would open its doors in the ‘70s. Over the decades, my family would move around, occupying different homes in Mile End, Outremont, Chateauguay, and Little Burgundy. They were friendly with the other Toisanese immigrants who had settled in Montreal by way of Chinese restaurant work. *Lee’s Garden*, *Green Garden*, *Skydragon*: these were just a few of the places owned by familiar faces. *Jade d’Orient* was the name of my family’s only successful restaurant, where they worked 16 hours a day, 365 days a year, for 10 years.

What can I read from the names of these places and people that I never knew? The more apt question seems to be what can be written from them. Surely I have some right to write

about these things, even if it would be more “fiction” than “bio.” Although after having read *Diamond Grill*, I’m not sure the distinction matters all that much.

We can be so averse to filling in blanks, dreaming, and fabricating memories that are not technically our own; yet, this is what allows us to visualise our very real closeness to our muddled origins. Cooking a Cantonese dish that may or may not resemble that of my predecessors produces a visceral, although invented, nostalgia in my body. The sensation makes me at once hesitant and hungry to cook more of this food, to reproduce flavours I’ve never truly tasted.

Throughout my first year of living alone, I made juk for breakfast. It’s a dish I associate with rare mornings at my grandparents’ home, when I would visit them with my family. I have honestly only eaten juk a few times in my life. All I know of it is that my grandmother makes it with leftover meat, rice, and soy sauce, and even this I’m unsure of. In fact, what I made in my one-bedroom apartment in the McGill Ghetto was not at all juk, but soupy instant oats with eggs, scallions, soy sauce, and five-spice. It didn’t taste anything like juk, and certainly no one but me would want to eat it, but it reminded me of those mornings, of which I remember almost nothing else. As Fred told me, “I’ll fake it and say that that’s one way to see it.”



**A Dragon Lady**  
Un mélange rafraîchissant de rhum et de jus de fruits traditionnel fort et vigoureux. **4<sup>95</sup>**  
A refreshing blend of rum and fruit juices. Powerful and steeped in tradition.

**B Volcano**  
Beaucoup de fumée et bruits sournois. Ce breuvage fera éruption devant vos yeux. Un mélange de rhum et de jus raffinés. **4<sup>75</sup>**  
Much smoke and rumbling noise. Erupting before your very eyes. A mix of rum and selected fruit juices.

**C Scorpion**  
Rhum, gin et brandy mélangés avec du jus de fruits. Un favori Hawaïen. **4<sup>95</sup>**  
An Hawaiian favorite. Rum, gin and brandy blended with tropical fruit juices.

At the age of 19, my father was in charge of the bar at Jade d'Orient. He learned to bartend from classes at the Sheraton Mount-Royal (now Les Cours Mont-Royal) and his Uncle Don, my grandfather's brother.







# The Lifelong Journey Towards Food Freedom

by Bery Mohammediyan

Illustration by Erin Sass

With the rise of social media has come an increase in healthy lifestyle promoters who all swear that their diet is the right one. I, like most social media users, am constantly exposed to different messages that reductively label bodies, foods, and lifestyles, making it difficult to know what being healthy means and looks like. Is a “skinny” body healthy, and a “fat” body unhealthy? Is this food “good” or “bad?” Should I feel guilty or ashamed about what I decide to eat or not eat? These types of questions drove my inner scientist to learn about a way out of this cyclical, black-and-white way of thinking about food. To do so, I turned to literature and two wonderful people in the field of dietetics and nutrition.

The Dietitians of Canada states that dietitians aim to help their clients and community embrace, understand, and enjoy food. Dietitians are also responsible for translating nutritional sciences to the public to guide them towards informed food choices. According to Jamie Lee, a registered dietitian at Sooma, a nutrition centre in Montreal, a dietitian’s role involves considering a holistic view of clients’ lives. Over the course of many appointments, dietitians gather information about medical, psychological, and family histories to expose potential issues, which allows them to plan interventions that optimize their clients’ mental and physical health.

Liam Fowler, a nutrition student at McGill, adds that dietitians are in a good position to help clients understand how physical practices relate to mental states, and how certain issues could require the help of a therapist. Additionally, dietitians are often the first people to validate and empathise with clients who are experiencing food-related struggles.

We are often encouraged through books, magazines, and social media platforms to diet, exercise, and pursue a lean body. Trends, such as the “summer body,” reinforce the widespread belief that a specific type of body, generally a skinnier one, is desirable and healthy, while other bodies are not. It is easy to fall for these trends, as they claim to promote a “healthy and clean” lifestyle, but there are many traps and misconceptions

surrounding this kind of discourse. The dieting lifestyle does not necessarily equate to a healthy lifestyle.

Liam believes that diets often focus on weight loss by portraying it as a source of happiness and accomplishment. He noted that one’s weight is not necessarily representative of one’s health, and that this misbelief “mainly comes from industries and politics because they want you to believe in this link between body size and health.” Additionally, diet culture plays an important role in the “moralisation of food as being good or bad,” which can result in negative physical and mental states because they cause us to “feel a moral obligation to be healthy.”

As a result of diet culture, people can start to feel guilty about their food choices or avoid social gatherings to minimise situations involving food choices that are beyond their control. Liam stressed that “Yes, foods are nutritionally all different, but emotional foods have to be considered equally. One food should not be good or bad, and the media does not promote that message.” In other words, food must begin to be seen as a way to nourish our bodies and enjoy ourselves, without the weight of a moral value based on biased diet culture messages.

Jamie added that another issue of dieting is that people perceive it as something that can be maintained for a long period of time, although this is often not possible because diets tend to be restrictive. As with following a diet, struggling to adhere to a diet can result in feelings of failure, guilt, and shame. Negative emotions concerning dieting can affect one’s self worth and body image, which may result in deeper issues, such as low self-esteem, avoidance of certain foods, or elimination of eating out altogether.

Leading dietitians Elyse Resch and Evelyn Tribble describe the impact of dieting too much as a “diet backlash.” A “diet backlash” can provoke urges and cravings, reduce one’s ability to manage those cravings, create the belief that one does not deserve food, cause social withdrawal, and lead to eating disorders. It is important to remember that dieting is part of a large industry, as mentioned by

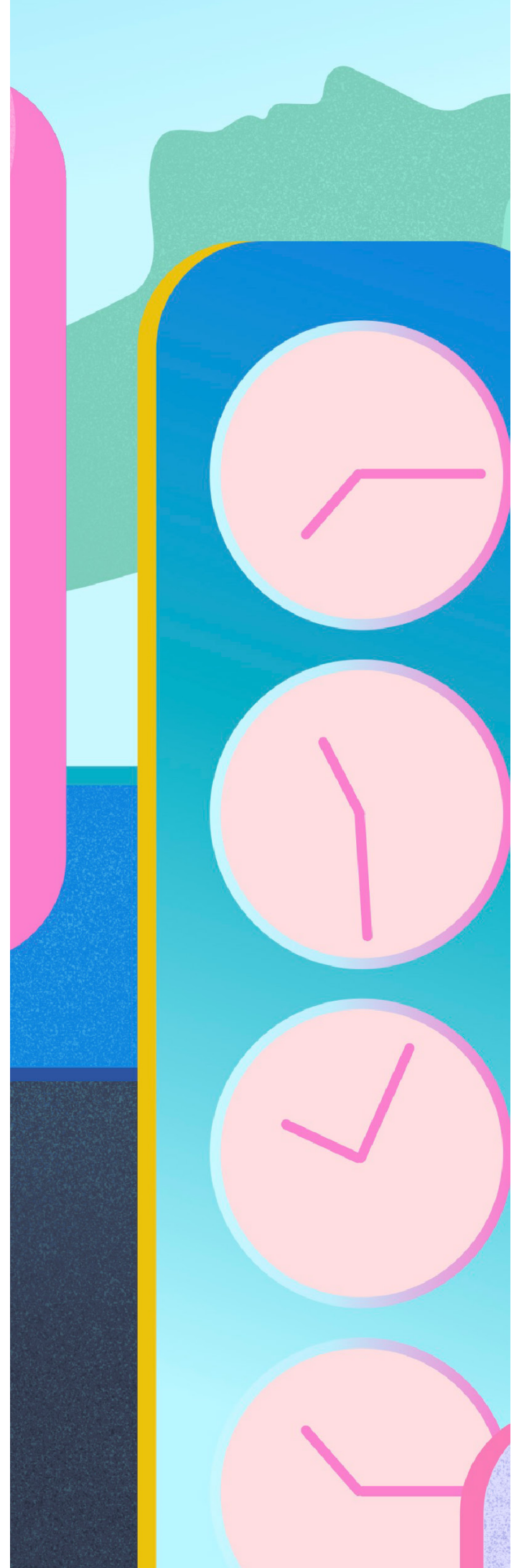
Liam, and it is to those industries' benefit to create diets that are unsustainable in order to sell more products. Resch and Tribole show that, since 1973, there has been a massive increase in the total number of diet products and diet foods; however, obesity rates are higher than ever, and eating disorders are also on the rise.

As argued by Resch and Tribole, as well as Jamie and Liam, most diets fail because of their restrictive nature, and often more weight is gained back. This is typically due to the body's shocked reaction to sudden weight loss and the difficulty of maintaining a diet. Liam and Jamie mentioned the idea of "set weight," a weight where your body performs optimally. This challenges the idea that your body's weight is entirely in your control. The body wants to stay balanced, and it activates different biological mechanisms to do so, such as increasing hunger signals when trying to lose weight or sweating when eating excessively. Jamie stated that, when you start to restrict food intake, "your body is screaming to get back to normal, which results in many side effects, such as mood changes, being irritable, losing focus, and [mixed] hunger signals; everything is dysregulated because you are going against your body."

If diets don't work in practically every aspect, what is a better alternative for approaching food as one works towards a healthier lifestyle? The answer may lie in intuitive eating and mindful eating.

Neither concept is about losing or gaining weight, but rather about developing a healthy relationship with food and your body. Jamie defined intuitive and mindful eating as an awareness of the food we eat daily and an ability to observe how our inner critic judges the food that we eat. Ultimately, the goal is to gain a neutral observing stance from which we can examine our eating behaviours during different mental, emotional, and physical states. There are many non-physical reasons to eat. It is normal to eat because of emotions, stress, and social situations, which came as a surprise to me! Often, we hear people being categorised as emotional eaters, typically in a pejorative sense. Jamie emphasised that emotional eating is normal; when eating becomes the only way to cope with negative emotions, however, it should be explored with a dietitian, who can help their client find ways to normalise emotional eating and try new emotional coping techniques.

Intuitive eating is about trusting your body, according to Liam. The goal is to use your inner wisdom to make choices around food that feel good for you, without listening too much to the "dieting voices" or feeling like you are in "a war with food." Intuitive eating and mindful eating are not the easiest concepts to grasp, as they operate in opposition to the hegemonic idea that there is



a “right way” to eat. Intuitive eating and mindful eating argue that there is no right way; it is about what feels good for your individual body. Intuitive eating promotes 10 principles: reject the diet mentality, honour your hunger, make peace with food, challenge the “food police,” feel your fullness, discover the satisfaction factor, cope with your emotions without using food, respect your body, feel the difference, and honour your health. The last principle is about honouring your health while also allowing yourself to enjoy many types of food, meaning that your diet does not have to be nutritionally perfect at all times to be healthy.

So, what should we aim for? What does an optimal or neutral relationship with food look like? Liam believes that it is always good to think of food as fuel for the body, but also as a source of joy for ourselves and our community. Being in a healthy and accepting relationship with food can bring happiness, but the process is different for everyone, and for every meal and moment. The goal is to recognize the positive emotions surrounding food, instead of emphasising the negative ones. Liam also warned about the dangers of toxic positivity; it is unrealistic to think that we will feel good every time we eat, and putting that kind of pressure on ourselves can cause unnecessary stress. Spending too much time worrying about food can be exhausting, so it is important to check in with ourselves to ensure that our life does not revolve around thinking about food.

It is also crucial to notice our relationship with social media, which can be especially toxic when it uncritically explores topics related to eating and fitness. Jamie argues that it is important to filter the social media content one is exposed to because there is both good and bad content when people share their experiences with eating. The process of filtering includes getting rid of content that promotes diet culture and surrounding yourself with content that promotes different body shapes and the enjoyment of food. Liam added that examples of potentially positive content are certain hashtags, such as #intuitiveeating and #beautyateverysize. What matters, in terms of social media and the Internet, is that you build a community with people and content that encourage you to build a healthy relationship with food.

For someone who is beginning to adopt an intuitive and mindful approach to eating, Liam stressed the importance of understanding that intuitive eating is not another diet and should not be approached as a tool for weight loss. Moreover, there is no right way to intuitively eat. Intuitive eating is not something that happens suddenly; it should be seen as a method to strive

towards, and as an approach to life that does not necessarily have an end point. Intuitive eating encourages people to trust themselves and approach food intake as something that can be constantly shifting, which is okay!

Those who would like to discuss topics related to food, eating, and body image can contact McGill’s Eating Disorder Centre, Safely Connected McGill, where Liam works. This student-led centre offers peer support that allows students to direct conversations on food, eating, and body image through group discussions. Students can talk about their experiences and emotions in a safe space. Safely Connected is about honouring, normalising, and validating individuals’ perspectives in an inclusive manner. Students can also volunteer to facilitate conversations, and there is an anonymous online platform called peer-to-peer connections where participants can be paired with a volunteer to listen to their food-related concerns.

Anorexia and Bulimia Quebec (ANEB) is another group-based program where people can sign up for sessions to discuss or listen to others speak about food-related topics. McGill also has professional dietitians available for students who prefer one-on-one conversations. Sooma, where Jamie works, is a private practice, which is a great resource because it provides clients with the opportunity for personalised treatment and offers them the support and attention they need for recovery. This approach can then include many health care providers beyond dietitians, such as therapists or medical doctors. There are also many books to learn more from. For English-speakers there is Christy Harrison’s *Anti-Diet* and Elise Resch and Evelyn Tribole’s *Intuitive Eating: A Revolutionary Anti-Diet Approach*. For French-speakers, there is Karine Gravel’s *De la culture des diètes à l’alimentation intuitive*.

Many of us start our journey of changing the way we eat thinking that dieting is the way to go. Throughout this exploration of intuitive and mindful eating, I have discovered something healthier for our body and mind: eating should not be about restriction, guilt, or shame. It is possible to become friends with your body and learn about the different foods that make your body feel good. Having a good relationship with food does not mean always eating “healthy” foods or loving your body at all times. It means that you can accept your hunger, your moods and emotions, various social contexts, and other variables that impact what and when you decide to eat. Through this article, I hope to have imparted some knowledge about the lifelong process that is intuitive eating, and to have encouraged you to give your body love through self-appreciation, compassion, and of course, food.



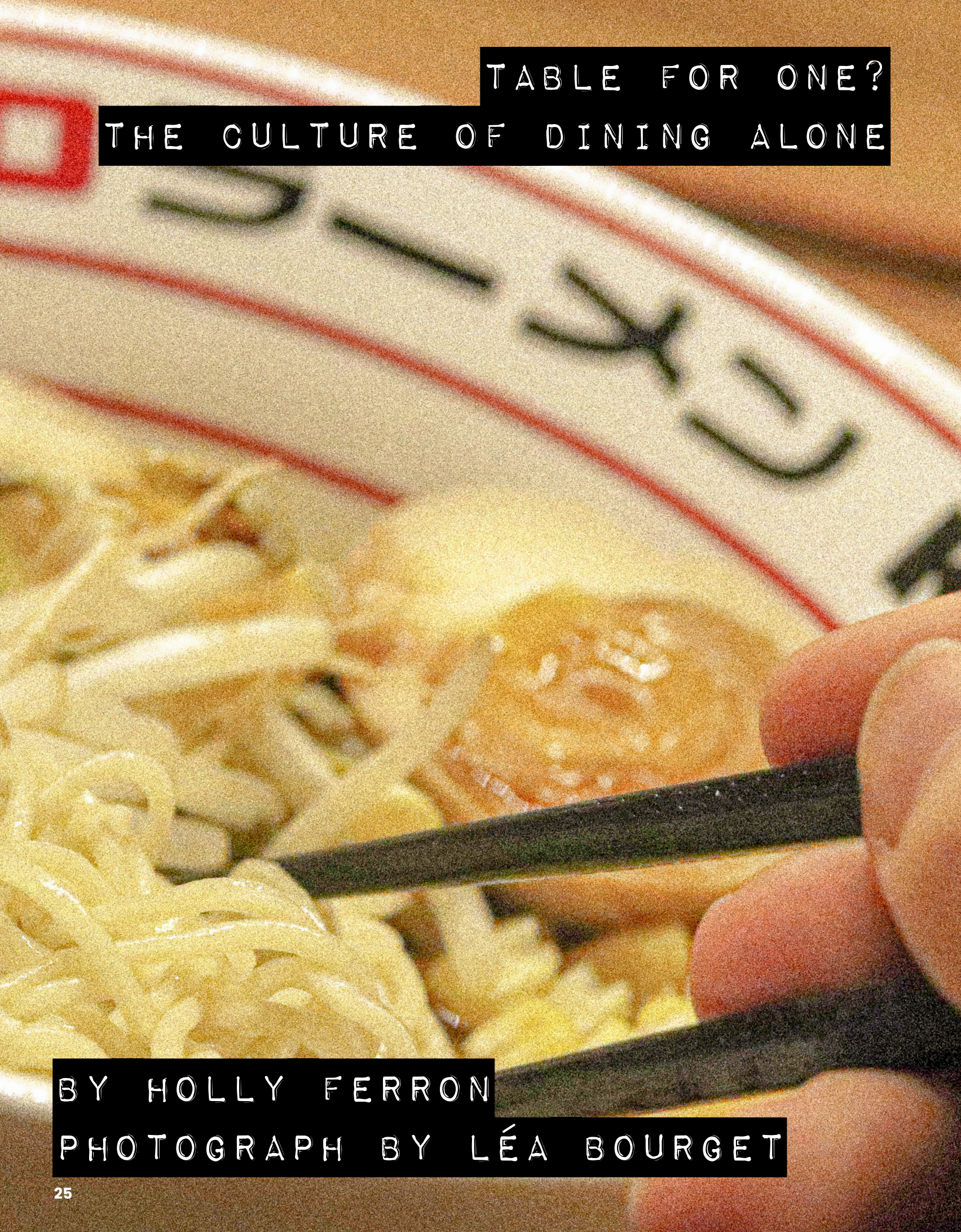


TABLE FOR ONE?  
THE CULTURE OF DINING ALONE

BY HOLLY FERRON  
PHOTOGRAPH BY LÉA BOURGET



Last week, on a cold rainy Montreal evening, some friends and I stumbled upon the cosiest Japanese ramen place near Concordia University. Kumamoto Ramen was unlike any restaurant experience I've had—it had separation booths with dividers, almost like those in the cubicle desks in the McLennan Library. They create near complete isolation from all other customers and staff. In theory, you could eat here without having a single human interaction, besides when paying the bill. This restaurant was probably what every introvert dreams about.

To place our orders, we rang a small red buzzer on the counter, and an employee opened up the sliding window to the kitchen. She took the order, closed the window, and about 15 minutes later the window slid up again, and a glistening bowl of pork ramen arrived in front of me. As the sweet smell of broth steamed up our cubicles, we ate in silence, contentment on our faces. One of my friends enthusiastically said that the dumplings we ordered were the best she'd ever had, and frankly, I agree. Maybe it was the warm and inviting ambiance or the unique sense of seclusion that made the meal so enjoyable; either way, it was quite a marking experience.

So many questions filled my head on the way back home as I listened to the gentle pattering of the rain on my Uber's window. I felt as though my traditional, Western-centric understanding of what it means to eat out had been completely challenged. For the short 20 years I've been alive, I've always viewed going out for dinner as a social ordeal. Whether it was for a family outing, a birthday or anniversary, or just to have a good time with friends, this is the typically Canadian understanding of what it means to dine out. Many Canadians would rather eat alone in the comfort of their own homes because not only can dining out be expensive, but there is an old stigma that is faced both here and in Japan that disapproves of solo-dining in public.

The culinary industry in Canada has been built around this understanding of group dining. Many restaurants seek to do more than just feed us—they create an immersive and interactive dining experience with ambiance, decor, and well-designed menus. Ryu Sushi is my favourite sushi restaurant in Montreal, and just being in the dining room getting served is an experience in itself; yet, it is the kind of place that I would only ever go to if it was for a dressed up occasion with friends. Although Ryu, like Kumamoto, is a Japanese restaurant, the social dining experience creates an effect completely opposite to that of the latter restaurant. Kumamoto offers an exceptional experience because, rather than focusing on creating friendly interactions, it limits human interaction as much as possible. Stripped of human interaction and vibrant decor, the restaurant is peculiar in the best way.

To many, it is common knowledge that solo restaurants like Kumamoto Ramen are extremely common in Japan. Part of the increase in popularity of eating meals alone is due to the rise in single-person households; between 1995 and 2021, the average household size shrank from 2.82 to 2.3 persons. More people living alone equates to more people dining alone more frequently. Montreal is a city full of students, many of whom no longer live with their families, but rather alone or with a few roommates. This may be why this individual ramen restaurant is such a hit around university campuses in Montreal, where students are likely to head for a solo meal.

Another reason for the rise in popularity of solo dining is shifting societal stigmas surrounding the idea of doing things alone. The “flavour concentration booth” method of dining was developed in the 1960s by the Ichiran Ramen chain of restaurants. The president of the company, Manabu Yoshitomi, stated that he came up with the concept of individual booths after learning that his female friends felt embarrassed to be slurping their noodles in public. On top of that, eating alone was cause for shame because it implied that one has nobody to eat with. Through the development of a place where people can go with the intention of eating alone, the stigma associated with it declined. A ramen chain was particularly effective in this regard because of ramen's mass popularity in Japan.

Since then, the pejorative connotations associated with solo dining and other solo activities have diminished significantly in Japan. Ichiran restaurants now have over 80 locations in Japan and have spread to locations all over the world. There has also been a rise in other solo activities, such as solo bars and individual karaoke. In a city like Montreal, which has a large population of unmarried, young adults, the stigma surrounding eating out alone is also being challenged. While there are many places to go and eat out with friends, solo places are likely to continue to become more prevalent.

In recent years, with the rise in solo-eaters, many Montreal restaurants and cafés have been working to make their spaces as comfortable as possible for people who dine alone by offering individual tables or bar stools to sit at. Café San Gennaro offers perfectly sized individual pizzas; Bar Henrietta has a lovely counter section for individuals; and Falafel Yoni offers delicious, vegan, Mediterranean meals for one.

When I entered Kumamoto Ramen looking for a bowl of hot soup to fill me up, little did I know that my understanding of solo-dining would be changed forever. There is nothing wrong with eating alone; as the conventional mode of living is changing throughout the world, so is the conventional dining experience that we know and love. But it is changing in the most inclusive and flavoursome way.



## *What it Takes to Run a Cabane à Sucre*

A Friday afternoon at Érablière Hilltop  
Dunham, QC

Photographed by Lysette Umwali











*Dining room staff arrive between 8:00-10:00 a.m. to prepare for the lunch service at 12:30. Downstairs, the kitchen staff, a team of 5-7 people, arrive around 6:45 a.m. to prep and cook the food. Today is Friday, and they are expecting 40 clients for lunch and 100 for dinner, at 6:30 p.m. On the weekend, they will seat up to 1000 people in total.*





*Since James Bond—who owns Hilltop with his daughter, Monica—acquired the business in 2015, he has worked to make it more and more traditional each year. Hilltop serves meatballs, pickled beets, pea soup, smoked pork jowl, and more. Anything not made in-house comes from local businesses in the surrounding Eastern Townships.*



*The maple syrup producers—Ian, Ryan, and René—arrive around 6:00 a.m., when they start to turn on the vacuum system that helps to suck the sap from the maple trees and begin the boiling process. Sometimes, they work 15-hour days. The longest shift they’ve ever worked was 33 hours. It is all dependent on the trees.*



*The Bonds own three sugar bushes: one right next to the sugar shack, another a 10-minute drive away, and another in Stanbridge East. Ian brought us to the second location.*





*This sugar bush is a haven to Ian. He loves to drive out here in the tractor and listen to the silence, interrupted only by the sound of the syrup pump. He claims that the water in the streams are clean enough to drink. He and his cousin, Ryan, work side-by-side. They have been in the syrup production business on-and-off their whole lives.*







*The trees are connected through a network of tubes that pull the sap into large containers. At this point, the sap is only around 1-3° Bx, or Brix. If you taste it, you can barely detect the sweetness. Once the containers are filled, Ian empties them into the giant jug on the back of his tractor and brings them back to the main site of production. It takes 40 gallons of sap to make just 1 gallon of syrup.*







*The syrup is filtered through reverse osmosis. The remaining water is as pure as it gets, completely devoid of minerals and impurities. The sap is now significantly sweeter, but still no more than around 20°-30° Bx. Next, the syrup is passed through the evaporator pans, where it is boiled gradually until it is 7°F above the boiling point, a number in constant flux according to weather conditions. Today, that's 216.6° F. The boiling temperature determines how long the sap is boiled for, and therefore how dark the syrup will be.*







*When the syrup is ready, it is pushed into a container. If it is at about 66° Bx, it is officially syrup-grade. Any lower, and it will ferment. Any higher, and it will crystallise. The syrup is filtered once more, then canned.*





*By around 2:30, all the diners have gone home, and a new shift of dining room staff will come in to get ready for the 6:30 dinner service. Ian, Ryan, and René remain in the sugar house, cleaning the pans, as they do every 4 hours to prevent a buildup of burnt syrup.*







# La douce histoire des rois-Claudes


par Agathe Nolla  
Illustration par Erin Sass




À Jean-Claude N., mon père,

Les chaleureuses rues d'un tard matin au Grau d'Agde, ce lieu du Midi qui offre aux marins la mer, l'étang et le fleuve, aux vigneronns les raisins et le vin, aux horticulteurs l'éventail sucré de la chair végétale, et enfin à mon père et moi le plaisir de tout déguster.

Nous passons, côte à côte, devant le primeur du Grau, "les Jardins Occitans," situé entre la boulangerie et la cave à vin, en face des vendeurs d'huîtres à deux mètres de la place du marché. Je le connais bien cet endroit. Avant nous y allions avec ma grand-mère tous les matins pour chercher des "légumes," en réalité des pommes de terre et des oignons, qu'elle nous préparait pour compléter la sole ou le turbot. Elle ne disait pas turbot, ça c'est le nom que mon père m'a appris tardivement, mais *rond-clouté*. « Tu vois bien ! C'est un rond, un ovale, un cercle quoi, et sur les écailles on voit des petits clous partout. » Et c'est ainsi qu'elle le demandait à la poissonnerie « deux ronds-cloutés s'il vous plaît ! » Quand elle est décédée en 2017, les poissons sont devenus plus chers et moins bons. Depuis sa mort, tous les étés j'accompagne mon père sur le même chemin cueillir des fruits et des légumes dans les paniers roulants du primeur.







Des pêches, des abricots, des olives, des cerises, des raisins, des mirabelles, des figues : mon père se doit de tous les goûter au moins une, sinon deux, trois ou quatre, fois afin de s'assurer de leur qualité avant d'aller me faire quérir un sachet de papier brun.

« J'en prends combien papa ? »

- Remplis le sachet, elles sont délicieuses aujourd'hui. »

Et ainsi je suivais les ordres de mon père pour tel ou tel fruit.

« Pas trop de cerises, elles sont chères ! Il nous reste quelques figues à la maison. Prend des pêches plates, c'est plus simple à manger ! »

Un jour mon père me demande de prendre une poignée de reines-claude, sous prétexte qu'il n'y en a plus dans le jardin. J'attrape un sachet de papier et, embarrassée, je me tourne vers lui :

« C'est quoi des reines-claude ? »

- Bah voyons, c'est le fruit de l'arbre à l'entrée de la maison.


- Tu me parles du prunier, n'est ce pas ? »

Bouleversé par mon ignorance, mon père transforme la séance de courses en une vulgaire leçon de botanique :

« La reine-claude c'est une prune très sucrée qui nous vient des Ottomans. François Ier en a goûté quand il a rencontré le sultan à la Porte Sublime. Il lui a donné le nom de sa femme, Claude, une reine peu aimée. Elle était laide, boiteuse, bigleuse et malade ! »

- Si un jour, je découvre un fruit, je l'appellerai le roi-Claude.

- Hé ben, je vois ce que tu penses de moi ! Tu me







flattes. Goûte, c'est délicieux, c'est très sucré ! »




Il en a gobé une et a aussitôt recraché le noyau. J'ai attrapé la prune jaunâtre et je l'ai observé avec dégoût. Si je l'avais mangé, j'aurais pu vous conter une madeleine de Proust, une histoire émouvante sur les saveurs de mon enfance, les moments de dégustation partagés avec mon père.

Mais, je ne l'ai pas mangé. Je n'aime pas les prunes. Je n'aime pas manger sans avoir payé. Mon père s'est énervé : « Toi et tes sœurs, vous êtes toutes chiantes sur la bouffe. Vous vous privez de tout un aspect de la culture, du partage, de la compréhension du monde qui vous entoure. Cette fermeture d'esprit, c'est d'une violence sans nom. Tu jouis d'un luxe prétentieux qui te permet de faire une sélection ridicule de ce que tu mets dans ta bouche. Absurde ! »

Nous avons payé et nous sommes partis. En rentrant, j'avais appris deux nouvelles choses: l'histoire abrégée de la reine-claude et la conviction inébranlable que je n'arriverai jamais à la cheville de mon père.

Il mangeait et il buvait avec tout le plaisir de vivre et connaître. Un jour, il n'a plus mangé, il n'a plus bu, et un jour, il n'était plus.

Les arbres du monde feront encore des reines-claude cet été, mais chez moi au Grau d'Agde, entre le fleuve, le soleil, l'étang et la mer, les fruits que nous ramasseront, tombés de l'arbre à l'entrée du jardin, s'appelleront des rois-Claudes.



43

*by Viva Noronha*

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As the school year—and my university experience—come to an end, I frequently find myself reminiscing on the fleeting, memorable moments I've shared with people over the last four years. Undoubtedly, some of the best ones were formed at the helm of a dining table, clutching onto our chairs to keep from falling off with laughter, sharing stories over a meal wiped clean off the plate. While I love the technical aspect of experimentation and innovation in recipe development, I often think of the humans who impassion the recipes. The connections we make to certain flavours through physical sensations, and the meanings we impart to certain meals through mental and emotional associations, exemplify the multidimensional experience that is gastronomy. Here are a few recipes from friends and family, and the stories that make them memorable.

# ANUSHKA

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Since everyone on my mom's side of the family is spread out across the world, sharing pictures of dinners on the family group chat and video calling each other to reveal that day's menu is how we've cultivated a closeness that connects us across Canada, Dubai, and New Zealand. The dishes are always some iteration of a Goan delicacy. This sort of virtual fellowship evokes a nostalgia only known to those who have been long separated from their place of origin. My cousin Anushka is definitely the family member I see most of in myself. Our love for delicious cuisine rivals our love for *Sex and the City*, and we agreed that this Chicken Vindaloo recipe beloved by our family was too acclaimed to gatekeep.

"This recipe is near and dear to my heart because it comes from my grandma, who's no longer with me. What's particularly striking is that it's not a meal common to typical Goan restaurant offerings, but when made right, imparts a huge sense of comfort. My earliest memories gorging on this Chicken Vindaloo are during my childhood years in Mumbai during the early '90s. Every Sunday, my grandma would call around her kids and grandkids to spend the day with her. The parents were resigned to their card games, while us kids would run around manically trying to keep ourselves entertained. I distinctly remember one feature of the house: an enormous, round dining table with a built in lazy susan that was too extravagant for an apartment that size, but was essential to holding together all the family members during a meal. Most memorably, despite the dish calling for a whole chicken, my grandma humoured the kids, who would always fight for the leg pieces, by adapting the recipe to contain only chicken drumsticks, saving anyone from disappointment. Not only does this recipe remind me of my late grandma, but it takes me back to those special moments of fellowship at a time that I can only revisit through this nostalgic meal!"

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## Chicken Vindaloo

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*serves 4*

### *Ingredients:*

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2 tbsps mustard or vegetable oil  
1 large red onion, finely sliced  
3 tomatoes, finely diced  
Coconut toddy or white vinegar, as needed  
1-1 1/2 kg whole chicken, cut into 8 or 16 pieces

### *For the masala:*

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10 dry Kashmiri chilis  
1 1/2 tsps cumin seeds  
1/2 inch piece of turmeric  
5 cloves  
7 green cardamom pods  
1 inch cinnamon stick  
1/2 garlic clove  
2 red onions  
Kosher salt, to taste

- 1 Using a food processor, grind all ingredients under masala into a fine paste, adding a little water as needed.
- 2 Heat oil over medium heat in a large, high-sided skillet and add sliced onions, frying until browned.
- 3 Add the diced tomatoes and fry until nearly all the juices have evaporated. This can take a few minutes.
- 4 Add in the ground masala and fry until the oil separates and the masala forms a clump.
- 5 Add in water and vinegar (just enough to form a loose gravy) and bring to a boil. Base the ratio of vinegar to water on your personal preference.
- 6 Pat the chicken dry and season all over with salt. Add to the skillet and simmer over low heat until cooked through, about 30 minutes, depending on the size of your chicken pieces.



# TERESA

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My friend Teresa is a true citizen of the world. Her appetite for cultural experiences has been wet by her extensive travels, and has given her one of the most top-notch palates out there.

“This recipe takes me back to preparing lunch with my host mom and her daughters, whom I stayed with for a month while travelling across Peru and Bolivia during my gap year in 2018. I’ve always made an effort to learn about the cultural value attached to food in any new place I visit, so the memory of my host mom effortlessly throwing together this delicious soup really stuck with me. Potatoes and quinoa are two of the main staples of the Andean region and have been cultivated for centuries since the Incan empire, so a typical meal was often served with at least one of the two. During the soup preparation, the air became scented with the aromatic oils of the crushed yellow aji pepper, which, coupled with the telenovela blasting in the background, makes for a sensory adventure! As simple as the dish is to make, I find that this soup allows me to bring back a little bit of the amazing people and experiences I was fortunate to have discovered during my travels. Hopefully this recipe will bring a little bit of South American comfort to anyone else who makes it as well.”

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## Sopa de Quinoa

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*serves 4*

### *Ingredients:*

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1 tbsp olive or vegetable oil  
1 white onion, finely chopped  
1 large carrot, diced  
1 large leek, sliced in thin rounds  
3 garlic cloves, crushed  
1 celery stalk, diced  
¼ of a cabbage, sliced thinly  
1 tsp tomato paste  
2 tsps crema de aji\*  
⅓ cup of quinoa  
4 cups chicken stock  
3 large white or yellow potatoes, peeled and diced (slightly larger than carrots and celery)  
1 small bunch cilantro, finely chopped  
Cumin, to taste, optional  
Fresh or dried oregano, to taste  
Salt and black pepper, to taste

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\*Available at Sabor Latino and most Latino grocery stores

- 1 Heat oil over medium heat in a large pot. Add the onion, garlic, carrot, leek, celery and cabbage. Season with salt, pepper, and cumin, and sauté until lightly browned, around 8-10 minutes. Add in the tomato paste and 1 tablespoon of the crema de aji, and fry for 1-2 minutes.
- 2 Add in the quinoa and toss with vegetables until well mixed.
- 3 Add in the chicken stock, potatoes, and oregano. Bring stock to a boil, then simmer for 30 minutes, or until vegetables are tender. Season with salt and pepper.
- 4 Stir in the cilantro and the remaining tablespoon of crema de aji.

# NOUR

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Truth be told, this whole collection was inspired by my friend Nour, who has regaled me with countless stories about her grandpa and his ability to produce his famous empanadas at a moment's notice, either for greeting her at the airport, or for feeding her rowdy friends at 3 a.m. after a night out. Finally, after much coaxing, I got her to put the recipe to paper. Over a laborious afternoon of rising, rolling, and crimping empanadas, she entertained me with her grandpa's empanada origin story.

"My grandparents, who've known each other since they were five years old, got married very young. Due to a bounty of siblings on each side - my grandpa had 12 - they really lived hand to mouth the first few years. One day, my grandfather had the good fortune, or blessing, as he would say, of meeting a man who offered to support them at no cost. They were promptly trained in the art of empanada making and given their own roadside shop to run. They spent the next 10 years in the hallowed walls of this little shack in my hometown of Santiago, working way beyond their means to support their family. There's no greater joy than spending time with my *abuelito*, whose love is exemplified through his delicious food."

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## Empanadas de Pino Chilenas

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*serves 4*

### *Ingredients:*

#### *For the dough:*

4 cups flour  
1 ½ cups water  
2 tsp Kosher salt  
7 tbsp melted shortening,  
butter, or olive oil

#### *For the filling:*

2 tbsps neutral or olive oil  
2 white onions, finely diced  
½ kg ground beef  
3 garlic cloves, finely minced  
1 tsp ground black pepper  
1 tbsp paprika  
1 tsp oregano  
Chili powder, optional  
Boiled eggs, olives, and  
raisins, optional  
Kosher salt, to taste

#### *For the egg wash:*

1 egg  
3 tbsp water  
2 tsp sugar

- 1 Place the flour on a countertop in "a volcano shape" (a mound with a whole in the center).
- 2 Warm the water (it should reach around 37° C) and, little by little, add it to the center of the volcano. Add the salt and the shortening to the water.
- 3 Knead until the dough is moist and smooth, but not sticky, around 15 minutes. If necessary, add more flour 1 tablespoon at a time.
- 4 Shape the dough into a ball and place in a lightly oiled bowl. Cover with a moist kitchen towel for 30 minutes-2 hours.
- 5 Divide the dough into 20 equal pieces. Using a rolling pin, roll each piece into a thin circle.

- 1 In a large skillet set over medium-high heat, heat oil. Add the beef, onions, garlic, paprika, oregano and chili powder. Season with salt and pepper. Cook until the beef is crispy and golden-brown, then lower heat to low and cook until most of the moisture from the onions have evaporated.
- 2 Set the mixture aside to cool to room temperature. For best consistency, leave it in the fridge overnight.

- 1 Make the egg wash by whisking together the egg, water, and sugar.
- 2 Place about 1 tablespoon of the filling in the center of each circle. If desired, add chopped boiled eggs, olives, and raisins.
- 3 Brush the edges of the dough with egg wash. Fold the dough over the filling into a half circle. Use a fork to seal the edges, or fold the edges over for a thicker and crispier perimeter.
- 4 Lightly brush the surface of the empanadas with leftover egg wash.
- 5 Place the empanadas on a sheet pan and bake at 300° C on the top rack for about 5 minutes, until they are crispy and golden-brown.
- 6 Lower the temperature to 200° C and move the empanadas to the middle rack. Cook for about 20 more minutes.

I recruited my friend Dakksh for this project for one, and only one, reason. He has in his arsenal the might of not only his grandma's beloved recipes, but the written word. His story has been told in his own, emboldened words for your enjoyment.

"My grandmother is a goddamned professional. James Caan in *Thief* wouldn't last a hot second with her in the kitchen. No one can, and maybe that's why no one can figure out how she cooks the way she does. Nothing about her food is unique, other than the fact that it is done so impeccably well. She isn't trying to make a name for herself, she's trying to make a meal that rumbles and shakes. People cross state lines to remind themselves of good food done great. When I get all too wrapped up in the individual, pushing boundaries, and unique natures, she reminds me of universal beauty. Do what you do, and don't worry about the bells and whistles. Like a hidden hit maker/heist planner, she knows what she knows, and if you know you know. Ain't two ways about it."

## Poori Aloo

*serves 2-3*

### *Ingredients:*

#### *For the poori:*

2 cups whole wheat flour  
1 tbsp fine semolina flour  
(optional, for crispy pooris)  
½ tsp Kosher salt  
2 tsp neutral oil, plus more for frying  
¾ cup water (add more as needed)

#### *For the potato bhaji:*

3 potatoes  
2 tbsps neutral oil  
1 tsp mustard seeds  
1 tsp cumin seeds  
1 tsp urad dal/black gram  
1 tsp chana dal/split chickpea  
⅛ tsp hing/asafoetida\*  
1-2 sprigs curry leaves  
1 inch ginger, finely minced  
1 green chili, finely chopped  
1 large onion, coarsely chopped  
1 large tomato, coarsely chopped  
¼ tsp turmeric powder  
¼ tsp salt  
1 tbsp fresh lemon juice  
Coriander, finely chopped, to taste

\*All Indian ingredients are available at New Market Meghna

- 1 In a large bowl, combine the whole wheat flour, semolina, salt, and 2 tsps oil. Mix well, until the flour is moist and crumbly.
- 2 Adding the water one tablespoon at a time, knead very well until a tight dough is formed (the quantity of water needed will depend on the temperature and flour quality).
- 3 Cover dough and allow it to rest at room temperature for at least 30 minutes.
- 4 When ready to fry the pooris, make small, golf ball-sized balls from the dough and roll them lightly in oil to prevent them from drying out.
- 5 Meanwhile, heat about 3 inches of oil in a large, heavy-bottomed pot until bubbles gather around a wooden spoon inserted into the oil.
- 6 Using a rolling pin, roll each ball out to a circle with a diameter of 6-8 cm.
- 7 Place the dough into the hot oil and submerge gently with a wide slotted spoon, until it puffs up. Then, flip the dough over and continue to fry until it turns golden-brown, about 3 minutes in total. Be careful to not overcrowd the pot.
- 8 Place the poori onto a metal rack to drain off excess oil. Use a paper towel to blot off any additional oil that remains.

- 1 In a medium saucepan, bring water to a boil. Salt the water and boil the potatoes until they are al dente. When the potatoes have cooled a bit, remove their peel and chop into ½-inch cubes.
- 2 In a large wok or skillet, heat 2 tbsps oil over medium-high heat. When the oil is hot, add mustard, cumin seeds, urad dal, and chana dal.
- 3 Once they start to splutter, add the hing and curry leaves. Fry until they change colour.
- 4 Add the ginger and green chili and fry until the chili releases its flavour into the oil (you will smell it).
- 5 Lower the heat a bit, then add the onion and cook until it becomes translucent. Add turmeric powder and salt and cook for 1 minute. Then, add the tomato and cook until it becomes soft and mushy.
- 6 Add the cooked potatoes and mix well. Add about 1 ½ cups of water. Cover and cook for 5 minutes, or until most of the water has evaporated. Salt to taste.
- 7 Mix in the lemon juice. Garnish with coriander and serve with the hot and puffy poori.



# CALL FOR CONTRIBUTORS

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Photograph by James Curran

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Does food make your face do this?

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